



# WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

## FISHING CONTEST REQUIREMENTS

Revised 1/7/2013

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL FISHING CONTESTS**

These requirements are authorized per Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Regulation (Chapter 46 Fishing Regulations)

- Fishing Contests requiring written authorization from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) include:
  - Any event for catching fish on waters of the state, excluding licensed fishing preserves, **and**;
  - Fifty (50) or more adult anglers (18 years of age or older) participate on a given date, **and**;
  - An entry or participation fee is charged.
- No person shall conduct a fishing contest without first obtaining a fishing contest permit. The permittee shall adhere to all requirements and stipulations provided on the fishing contest permit.
- Failure to comply with the requirements of the fishing contest permit is a violation of Wyoming Game and Fish Commission (Commission) regulations and may result in denial of future fishing contest permits.
- Applications. Anyone desiring to hold a fishing contest shall submit an application for a fishing contest permit on a form provided by the WGFD. Fishing contest applications may be submitted one (1) year (365 days) prior to the start of the fishing contest, but shall be submitted at least thirty (30) days prior to the start of the fishing contest.
- Live Release Fishing Contests. No person shall release live fish in a fishing contest without a fishing contest permit authorizing live release. Additional requirements for live release fishing contests are provided in this document starting on page 4.
- Reasons for Denying Fishing Contest Permits. The WGFD may deny an application if information is falsified on the application, or if the application is incomplete or incorrectly filled out. Fishing contest permits shall not be issued if the WGFD determines the fishing contest does not comply with Wyoming Statutes, Commission regulations, shall be harmful to the fisheries resource, or that public use facilities such as boat ramps, parking areas, campgrounds, and related facilities are inadequate to support the contest.
- Post-Fishing Contest Report Required. Within thirty (30) days after completion of the fishing contest, the permittee shall submit a legible, complete and accurate written report to the WGFD on a form provided by the WGFD. Failure to submit this report may result in denial of future fishing contest permits. For some contests a length and weight report may

not be required. In those cases it will be noted on the contest permit. If an approved contest did not take place, a report stating why the contest was cancelled must be submitted within 30 days following the contest.

- The fishing contest sponsor is responsible to ensure that all contestants are aware of the need to comply with all WGFD Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Regulations (Chapter 62). Specifically, any contest watercraft that is coming from out of the state of Wyoming from March 1 through November 30, is required to undergo a mandatory inspection by an authorized AIS inspector prior to launching. In addition, sponsors should inform contestants that all boats must be Drained, Clean, and Dry prior to launching. Any contest boat may be subject to an AIS inspection at the discretion of the WGFD. More information on AIS and the Drain, Clean, Dry protocol can be found at:  
<http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/fishing-1000206.aspx>
- The fishing contest sponsor is responsible to ensure that all contestants are aware of fishing license requirements and the current Wyoming Fishing Regulations and Watercraft Regulations.
- Contest rules must disqualify any angler who is cited for a violation of WGFD Fishing, Watercraft or Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations while participating in the contest (Chapters 46, 22 and 62). While participating is defined as 6 PM on the day prior to the start of the contest through 6 PM of the final day of the contest.
- The WGFD may authorize multiple fishing contests for the same date. Information is available regarding contests that have been authorized by calling 307-777-4559.
- Requirements for other permits. For waters where federal agencies, county parks, power companies, or Wyoming State Parks and Recreation Commission control access, permission to hold a fishing contest may also be required. It is the obligation of the fishing contest sponsors to obtain these permits as required. Possession of a WGFD fishing contest permit does not guarantee special use permits from the land managers.
- Please mail Fishing Contest Applications to:  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
Fish Division  
5400 Bishop Blvd.  
Cheyenne, WY 82006-0001

## **TYPES OF CONTESTS AND RESTRICTIONS**

**Live Release Contests:** A contest where anglers are permitted to catch and retain fish alive, until the fish are measured and/or weighed, then released alive back into the water of capture. These will only be authorized for cool and warm water fish species (walleye, sauger, yellow perch, northern pike, channel catfish, crappie, black bass, and sunfish). Live Release Contests will not be authorized for walleye when warm surface water temperatures are expected (after June 30). Contest sponsors must demonstrate that contest rules and procedures meet the “ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR LIVE-RELEASE FISHING CONTESTS” below. Deviations from those guidelines will be considered based on their potential to reduce fish stress.

**Progressive Live-Release Contests:** A contest where multiple locations are available on the water to measure fish. The length of a fish is obtained prior to release and fish are not weighed. These contests typically have contest rules that reduce fish holding and handling stress. Contest participants are encouraged to enter fish throughout the day, reducing the time fish are held in livewells. This format is preferred by WGFD.

**Central Live Release Contests (weigh-in format):** A type of contest where fish are brought to a single, centralized location to be entered in the contest. The weigh-in is generally held once at the end of the fishing day. These contests shall not be authorized for walleye. Contest applications for other cool and warm water fish species will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Trout Catch and Release Contests:** A type of contest where fish are caught, measured for length and/or weight, and immediately returned alive to the water of capture. These fish are not retained in a livewell. These will be authorized only for contests that restrict tackle to artificial flies and lures only. Fish must be returned immediately to the water following measurements taken.

**Harvest Contests:** A type of contest where fish are caught and the decision to keep the fish is made immediately; fish that are kept are reduced to the angler’s possession and applied to the angler’s possession limit. Fish reduced to the angler’s possession **shall not** be returned to the water. No angler may enter fish exceeding the daily creel and possession limit. Contests that provide hourly big fish prizes may be required to keep additional records.

**Ice Fishing Contests:** These will be authorized only as harvest contests. The decision to release a fish must be made immediately after capture.

**Contests on waters with illegally introduced species:** A contest targeting an illegally introduced species may be authorized as a harvest only contest. An illegally introduced species is one that has been stocked or released without the consent and supervision of the WGFD. Examples of illegally introduced species include walleye in Lake DeSmet, burbot in Flaming Gorge Reservoir and smallmouth bass in Sulphur Creek Reservoir.

## **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR LIVE-RELEASE FISHING CONTESTS**

The WGFD provides the following requirements for live-release fishing contests.

- Live-release fishing contests will only be permitted for cool and warm water fish species (walleye, sauger, yellow perch, northern pike, channel catfish, crappie, black bass, and sunfish).
- Sorting and releasing fish in the angler's boat livewell (culling) prior to the contest release is not permitted. The decision to release a fish or keep it for contest entry must be made immediately upon capture. Once a fish is put in an angler's boat livewell, it can only be released at a contest release station. Contest rules must clearly state this requirement.
- Live release contests shall not be authorized for walleye from July 1 through September 15.

Success of live-release angling contests depends on survival of released fish. Contest fish experience stress in varying forms and may die from it. By reducing stress, fish mortality during live-release contests can be minimized. The following requirements are intended to minimize fish stress, thus reducing contest-related mortality. Contest rules and application must clearly indicate that these stipulations are met prior to the issuance of a fishing contest permit.

Participants in live release contests shall not have contest target species (fish which may be entered into the contest) in their possession at the start of the contest and shall not exceed the possession limit at any time during the contest. Contest participants must keep any fish that are unable to right themselves at release stations (or fish that otherwise seem weak and may suffer post-release death). Fish in possession restrict the contestant's ability to possess the same species of fish caught during the contest since they must have the capacity to keep fish that die during the contest.

### **Release Stations (applies to both Progressive and Central Live-Release Contests)**

- Contest sponsors shall organize their contests to incorporate the following:
  - Provide adequate staffing to expedite release and reduce mortality.
  - Fish shall not be out of the water more than one (1) minute during the weigh-in process. Less is preferable.
  - Streamline the contest processing and release to minimize the time between removal from livewells and release of fish. Delayed mortality is greatly increased when a fish's gills are exposed to air. Waiting lines and holding fish in baskets or nets are not allowed.
- Fish shall be released into water a minimum of four (4) feet deep. This will require some additional planning to obtain an adequate release location either at a dock or anchored boat.
- Fish unable to right themselves (or fish that otherwise seem weak and may suffer post-release death) shall be declared dead, and shall be given to the contestant and count towards the daily possession limit of that contestant.

- Inappropriate handling practices (e.g., throwing fish or holding them up by the gills or eyes) may result in the denial for future contest permits. Inappropriate and discourteous actions by contest participants and organizers increases public opposition and may jeopardize future opportunities to hold live release contests.
- Fizzing (releasing air from the swim bladder with a needle) is not allowed under any circumstances.

**Progressive Live-Release Contests:** A contest where multiple locations are available on the water to measure fish. The length of a fish is obtained prior to release and fish are not weighed.

- No more than five (5) fish may be kept in a livewell or on a boat. The time fish spend in a livewell shall be no more than two (2) hours.
- Release locations must be located to minimize travel distance for contest anglers. See the list below for the minimum number of release stations. Contact WGFD for waters not listed. A complete description of the release stations to include boat ramp name or GPS location must be provided on the contest application.

Water	Release stations	Surface Acres
Alcova Reservoir	1	2,340
Boysen Reservoir	2	19,560
Glendo Reservoir	3	12,365
Keyhole Reservoir	2	9,420
Pathfinder Reservoir	3	22,000
Seminole Reservoir	3	20,000

#### **Additional Requirements for Progressive Live-Release Contest Release Stations**

- Contest sponsors shall organize their contests to incorporate the following:
  - Provide the opportunity to enter fish into the contest during the entire contest-fishing day and encourage contestants to enter fish multiple times during the day.
  - If fish lengths are not obtained on the angler's boat, fish shall be transported in a container from boat live well to release station in water deep enough to allow all fish to swim upright.

**Central Live Release Contests (weigh-in format):** A contest where fish are brought to a single, centralized location to be weighed.

- These contests shall not be authorized for walleye. Contest applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis and those authorized must have adequate equipment and staffing and demonstrate clearly that fish stress will be minimized. A complete description of the release station and weigh-in operation must accompany the contest application.
- Contests must minimize stress on fish by the following means (at a minimum).
  - No more than ten (10) fish may be kept in a livewell or on a boat.
  - Fish shall be transported in a container from boat live well to weigh station in water deep enough to allow all fish to swim upright.